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## Man arrested for \$23,000 in metal theft

JANUARY 25, 2013 1:22 PM • BY SANJAY TALWANI INDEPENDENT RECORD

An East Helena man with a record of theft was arrested Thursday on charges of stealing metal cables and other items worth more than \$23,000 from businesses in the area.

Police believe that in the last week Chester Charles Leatherberry, 55, stole copper welding cable worth more than \$1,500 from the worksite of the new Stockman's Bank branch and North Sanders Street and Custer Avenue; 2,900 feet of cable, worth \$20,000, from Northside Welding on Chestnut Street; four truck rims and other items from Helena Transmission Center on Chestnut Street; and cable worth more than \$1,500 from Montana Rail Link.

According to a police affidavit filed Friday in Justice Court, a recycler in Missoula notified police he had purchased 754 pounds of copper wire, 281 pounds of aluminum wire and 90 pounds of radiators from someone presenting himself, with ID, as Leatherberry. A picture from the location showed the man, along with a female, driving a 1999 Dodge Dakota pickup.

Police Thursday found Leatherberry at his home on the 3000 block of Lake Helena Drive driving such a truck with a spool of wire resembling the one reported missing from Montana Rail Link, according to the affidavit.

In Leatherberry's garage, the officer saw at least two pallets with piles of copper wire; and least 22 tire rims; and railroad cross-bracings and brackets.

Leatherberry has convictions for burglary or theft in Stillwater, Butte-Silver Bow and Yellowstone counties going back to 1996, according to Department of Corrections data.



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## Recycling company pushes for cooperation in reporting scrap thefts

Posted: Jan 28, 2013 4:27 PM by Lindsey Gordon (lindsey@kxlh.com)

Updated: Jan 28, 2013 4:53 PM



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On Friday a man was arrested and charged in connection with a string of burglaries and thefts in the Helena area involving copper and other scrap materials.

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Law enforcement was able to arrest the suspect in Missoula thanks to a network among those vested in scrap recycling thefts.

Eric Meredith, branch manager of Pacific Steel & Recycling in Helena, said, "By getting the word out quickly, which we were able to do, Pacific Steel and Recycling, in cooperation with the Helena Police Department, as well as the business owners and managers...and our branch manager and crew identified the material and were able to provide that information to the police department."

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It also helps when a scrap recycling company follows Montana law.

"It requires the scrap recycling company to obtain a valid ID from the person selling the material," explained Meredith.

This is required when the value of the purchase is greater than \$50.

Hardy Construction in Billings reported materials stolen from their construction site last week at the corner of Custer and Sanders. They had 800-feet of welding leads stolen, totaling about \$3,000 in value.

"It's a real inconvenience," said Robe Lowe, a project supervisor for Hardy

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Construction. "To recycle that welding lead, you're getting about \$2 a pound, which is approximately \$2 a lineal foot. It costs \$14 dollars a foot to replace it as welding lead."

There is a website Meredith is encouraging law enforcement and business to utilize--a neighborhood watch program for the scrap recycling industry--called "[Scrap Theft Alert](#)."

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The faster they are able to get the word out that goods were stolen the better chance there is of catching those responsible.

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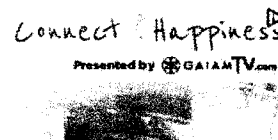


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